

THE
POOR PLAYER:

A STORY,

FOR

A Winter's Fireside,

BY

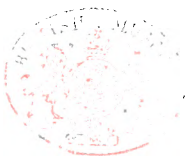
HARRY MUNRO.

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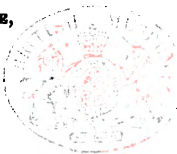
TO
Sir Charles Munro, Bart.,
(OF FOULIS,)
THIS SIMPLE STORY
IS
MOST AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED
BY
HIS SON,
THE AUTHOR.

P R E F A C E.

Not seeing the utility of a preface, I shall merely say that, if this little work (unpretending as it is) be fortunate enough to please, the writer's object will have been attained.

HARRY MUNRO.

SWISS COTTAGE,
HOUNSLOW.



January 10th, 1853.

THE POOR PLAYER:

A Tale.

sun SNOW on the mountains, covering their high and misty tops; snow in the silent valleys, gemming the meads with countless diamonds, glittering and flashing in a December's ~~snow~~; snow on the yards of the gallant ship at sea, minding the poor mariner of friends held dear and parents loved, enjoying now their winter firesides; snow on the brave old mail, as the steaming horses roll it merrily along, accompanied by the sharp and cheering crack of the whip, ringing through the frosty air; snow on the ponderous Christmas packages piled alarmingly high upon its sturdy roof, sent by London friends to gladden country hearts; snow on the rich man as he hastens along in well lined cloak, thinking how best he may assist the poor who, shivering, pass him by; snow on the beggar's tattered clothes,

as he gazes vacantly at the well stored shops, and thinks of days far back into the past, when he, a child, had known a mother's care, and welcomed Christmas in with smiling joy, as they, the passers, are preparing now to do ; snow o'er the silent tenants of the grave—snow lightly lying ; gently hinting, in nature's quiet way, that, with a covering of memories, pure and holy, we should shield the erring, passed away, from the coward malice of the world !

On a stool, gazing at the smouldering embers in the rusty grate, sits Willie Holmes. He is the only son of a solicitor, and was educated to follow the profession of ~~his~~ father. A love of the stage, at the age of twenty-two, induced him to leave his parent, and join a company of strolling players. His father soon after died, leaving him without a shilling, and to his most miserable fate. However, being full of the joyous hopefulness of youth, he made the best of his bad fortune, and struggled on. A few years passed away, and he married an actress ; one who willingly shared the hard, hard lot, to which, unfortunately, the majority of actors are inevitably doomed. After enduring many terrible privations, with that sweet and gentle resignation

which only a woman knows, a bitter winter's night saw her meek spirit take its flight to that blessed place where "The weary are at rest, and the wicked cease from troubling." Yes, she died! died wretchedly, by the roadside, while journeying, on foot, to join a company. In vain the frantic husband prest her cold body to his breast—in vain, he called upon her loved name—she had passed away into that beauteous spirit-land, from the fair scenes of which no mortal e'er returns. The parish buried what remained of the poor Thespian; and the broken-hearted, lonely man, child in hand, trudged on his weary way with head down-bent, and steps reluctant—reluctant, that each movement bore him further from the last home of her, who had smiles for his joy and tears for his grief.

At the time our simple tale commences, he had passed through every phase of a stroller's life, and is now—Heaven help him!—starving. The room in which he is seated is one of the most abject description; the walls are entirely ignorant of paper, and even the plaster is rendered unsightly by the damp, which has blackened it. Here and there a large and ugly gap presents itself, exposing to view the broken, decayed lathes.

Through these openings the mice may be heard rushing; and anon, one, bolder than the rest of his fellows, will peer at the wretched inmates of the apartment, greedily eyeing the morsel of candle stuck in the mouth of a bottle. A broken chair, a stool, an old deal table, and a bedstead, is all, of furniture, the room contains. Hung against the disfigured walls are the few "properties" the player owns; the tinsel of which shines in fearful mockery of the surrounding misery. There, upon a rusty nail, hangs the kingly coronet, with which, at night, he "struts and frets his hour," and, with majestic action, expresses to his assembled guests a hope, that "good digestion may wait on appetite;" when, in reality, had he the wherewithal to satisfy the frightful cravings of the latter, he would with uncommon pleasure allow the former to wait upon itself.

We have said that Holmes is seated on a stool, gazing at the smouldering embers in the grate. To look at him, as he sits with his chin resting upon his hands; his dark hair matted; his eyes lustreless and vacant; his face ghastly, from the combined effects of want, and the habitual use of paint, we should take him to be a man of forty-five; so haggard and worn are his looks! Alas! thirty

summers have barely passed away, since first he was called to enact a part in this world's stern drama. Blasted hopes, and the contempt which is ever exhibited towards those who are unknown in the profession, have done their work effectually, and he is prematurely old. Careworn, and hungry—pinched by the bitter cold of a severe winter, he presents a fearful example to those reckless youths, who thoughtlessly blind themselves to all considerations, and adopt a line of life, the blanks in the lottery of which are awful to contemplate!

“Poor Child! Poor child!” exclaims Holmes, turning towards the bed, on which the figure of a little girl is visible; “and to die so young too, when life should be one glow of joy! not even the means to soothe her downward passage to the grave! Oh, heaven!” he cries in the agony of his mind, “that in this vast and wealthy country, a being should die of sheer starvation!” And with his pale face suffused by tears, his eyes expressing agonised despair, and his bony hands clenched spasmodically together, he presents a picture of the most profound misery. Falling upon his knees, with his still closed hands raised towards heaven, he fervently prays that his poor child may yet be

spared ; or, if it is His will to take her thus young and unsullied to his bosom, that she may glide from existence painlessly, and without sorrow ! He remains for a time fixed and motionless, (lost to a consciousness of all around by the depth and mightiness of his grief,) with his head resting upon his chest ; then, rising slowly, he moves noiselessly towards the bed ; and turning down the worn patched coverlet, exposes to view a face once beautiful. Ah ! how beautiful still to him, who fondly, yet despairingly gazes ! but now sadly emaciated for want of proper nourishment. Stooping gently he kisses the sleeper's fair brow, but the touch, light as it is, awakens her ; and, extending her thin arm languidly, she breathes, rather than says—

“Dear father !”

In a moment her little hand is clasped in his, while the hot tears fall fast on both.

“Dear father,” she repeats in a low faint voice, “I have had such a beautiful dream !”

“Indeed, my child !” replies Holmes, vainly endeavouring to smile through his tears, and stroking down the masses of her fair hair, “What was it about ?”

“I thought,” she answers, while her soft blue eyes are raised with most ineffable devo-

tion towards the home to which she is hastening so rapidly, "that a fair creature, robed in purest white, bore me upward from this land of want, to realms where such a thing was never, never known!"

"My poor one!" ejaculates Holmes, speaking thickly.

"I thought, too," continues the dying child, a sweet smile wreathed around her beautiful mouth, "that you, dearest father, would have stayed my going hence; when a voice came swelling, and swelling, through the air into our lowly room—a voice, so soft, so sweet, so musical, that every sense, save that of hearing, seemed suspended—and it exclaimed 'Suffer little children to come unto me.' Methought, at the words, you sank down upon your knees, and with upraised hands reverently exclaimed '*Heaven thy will be done.*'"

At this moment the flush, produced by excitement, flies from her face, leaving it fearfully pallid.

"Ah! she is dying!" shrieks the horrified father, clasping her convulsively to his breast, and looking, in his terrible despair, as if he would prevent death's dark mantle o'er-shadowing the one without the other. "She is dying!" he repeats wildly, "dying of hunger."

Gazing with distraction upon his child's sweet face disfigured by want and long suffering, his chest heaves with the powerful emotion struggling and battling round his heart. Turning his eyes reverentially towards heaven, he exclaims "Oh, Almighty Father! is it thus thy earthly stewards should fulfil their offices of charity? Is it *just* that those who hold broad lands, and mighty wealth, should pander to the morbid feelings of their hearts, by showering down vast sums of gold, to clothe the savage and to free the slave, when thousands of our honest poor are forced to crime, or starved to death in garrets!"

A suppressed cry bursts from the child at this moment. She has fainted.

Whilst Holmes is engaged using such restoratives as the occasion requires, a man enters the apartment: we will pause a while to describe his appearance.

The new-comer appears to be considerably on the wrong side of thirty. He wears a pilot coat, which has successfully vindicated its title to the name, by weathering, in the most unflinching manner, the storms of many, very many, tempestuous winters. His spare legs are shivering in dirty white trousers, and a tough struggle seems continually to be going

on between the braces on the one hand, and the straps on the other. To such a length is this warfare continued on the parts of the belligerent straps and braces, that the observer may be pardoned owning to a nervous presentiment that it would end by the unfortunate trousers giving way in the middle. His boots are covered by a multiplicity of patches, and exhibit at the heels, a shocking tendency to one-sidedness. His face has an unquestionably jolly appearance; with small grey eyes and a nose of an exceedingly warm colour. The stiff upright bristles that flourish upon his cranium in place of hair, are surmounted by a hat most disagreeably greasy looking, which he wears at an inclination of three degrees. His hands are thrust down into the bottom of his pockets, and he has a curious bundle under his arm. He is the "low comedian" of the company to which Holmes belongs, and answers cheerfully to the name of Joey Tring.

No sooner does this personage perceive the state of affairs, than he hastens to give what assistance he can, first depositing the afore-said curious looking bundle on the table. It is quite delightful to witness the good-natured efforts of the little man; now, administering

water to the invalid, with all the tenderness of a woman ; then, kindly endeavouring to re-assure the distracted father by declaring that it is "all right." An expression which, in ninety-nine cases out of the hundred, means exactly the reverse of that agreeable state.

Slowly and by degrees returning consciousness animates the face of the young sufferer ; and, when a sweet though a sad smile of thanks steals across her wan features, (like the sun's rays just issuing from one cloud to enter into the obscuring embrace of a second,) the pleasure of honest Joey knows no bounds whatever. His joy manifests itself in divers eccentric ways. We will not say that he stands upon his head, as many individuals, of an unhappy turn of mind, feel an irresistible inclination to do whenever they find themselves called upon to exhibit a proper return for any accession to their stock of mortal bliss ; but he does what is quite as desperate under the circumstances ; he remains firmly, unflinchingly, in his natural position.

After anxiously inquiring whether she really is "all right," and receiving an answer in the affirmative, Joey bustles about with all the quiet of a German waiter, and in a few seconds appear upon the table the contents of the

mysterious bundle. There is some ham and pork, greens and potatoes, steaming hot, in a yellow bason, and a brown loaf. Settling these to his entire satisfaction, he darts outside the door, and makes his appearance with a foaming tankard of ale, spiced after the most approved fashion. What a wonderful beautifier is good nature to be sure! Our little friend's red face looked positively agreeable under its genial influence.

After Lily has been induced to partake, sparingly, of the meal, they both draw up to the table. Holmes does so with a sad heart, for he feels convinced his child is past the reach of earthly aid. He eats but little, and that merely to satisfy the cravings of hunger. Joey, on the contrary, dines with the tremendous relish imparted by an unimpaired digestion, and a day's fast. During a pause, the latter breaks the silence by exclaiming "How do you think I obtained this meal?" Holmes shakes his head.

"You can't guess?" asks Joey, "then I'll forthwith enlighten you."

Before doing so, however, he proceeds to clear away the things. When the room looks somewhat decent, he peeps into the street, and sees the snow falling thickly—in large

flakes; the house-tops are covered inches thick, and the trees assume a new form under their picturesque winter garb. Turning his gaze towards the grate, he perceives there is no fire; sighing slightly, and with a pitying look over at his brother actor, (whose face is hidden in his hands,) he shakes himself roughly; then lighting his pipe with flint and steel, he sits down and speaks as follows:—

“Being hard pressed by the dark fiend, hunger, and put to the extreme end of my wits to satisfy his awful cravings, I sauntered into the parlour of the ‘Green Dragon’ in the faint hope of meeting some kind friend to whose generosity I might owe that luxury—a dinner. I soon entered into conversation with the occupants of the room, and was particularly amused at the boasting of a would-be cute ‘down-easter,’ who had, by some means or other, found his way into the town. According to his own modest account, he could do everything, or next to it. This was my man; I saw it at once, and to work I went. I soon drew the unsuspecting gentleman into a line favourable to the execution of my quickly conceived project; and, as I knew it would require but little newness of invention, I did not beat about the bush. During one of his

boastful harangues I abruptly took him up, asking this noblest son 'of the finest nation in all the world,' whether he mean't to say that 'he could eat the *whole* of those six biscuits on the table in five minutes?' "

" 'I calculate I can,' grinned the fellow, his capacious mouth causing a shiver to run throughout my body, 'leastways I reckon I'm a tarnation fool if I can't. Guess you wouldn't like to make a bet of it?' "

" 'Oh! yes I should!' I exclaimed, overjoyed at having a dinner in perspective, "I hav'nt the slightest particle of an objection to stake a crown upon so difficult a feat."

" 'Strikes me exceedingly forcible I'll take it, and no mistake tu,' shouted the delighted Yankee. 'Why, du yu know, gentlemen, my uld dad had such a tarnation large throat that, without the least effort, he could have got down all the blessed rubbish that the ministers of the present day stuff into the open mouth of John Bull, and which he finds so 'nation difficult to swallow, much less digest.'

" When he had finished, he gave me a look out of the corner of his eye—coughed violently once or twice—inclined his hat considerably—and then, thrusting his fiery hands into the mysterious depths of his enormous pockets,

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awaited with awful composure my reply. His attitude had great power of language: it said quite distinctly,—‘There, sir, you’ve heard what my dad could have done! I inherit his swallow! What *air* six tough biscuits, I should like tu know, compared with *ministerial rubbish*!’ I was stone however and not to beshaken, so a watch was produced, time ascertained, and to work he went, smashing the biscuits one after the other with his great fist, and making them disappear in a way anything but pleasant to look upon, considering I did not possess the smallest coin in the realm. He accomplished the feat, as he thought, in the space of three minutes. With a diabolical grin from ear to ear, he demanded the amount of the bet. The applause at this moment was very great, but it received a rather sudden check by my exclaiming, to the consternation of all, that he had not yet won the wager!”

“‘Not won it!’ bawled the enraged son ‘of the finest nation in all the world,’ ‘calculate, my fine fellar, you’re a considerable long way out of your mind. Guess when you get home, you’ll find your mistake.’

“‘You’ve not won it!’ I repeated, coolly; and perceiving the time had expired, I pointed

to the table quietly, saying—‘My excellent friend must first swallow those crumbs ere he can conscientiously declare he has eaten the *whole* of the biscuits.’ The look of utter astonishment on the Yankee’s face, was a perfect study; and, after paying me the crown, he did not tarry long, but sneaked from the room considerably crest-fallen. In a short time I took my leave, and thus I obtained our meal.”

“I thank you, heartily, for thinking of us, Joey!” says Holmes, grasping the other’s hand and shaking it warmly, “but actors are always good to their comrades, and you are the best I ever knew.”

“You are right as to the first,” cries the honest-hearted Joey, returning his friend’s grasp, “and if the public only knew more of a country actor’s struggles and privations—the intense application required for the proper discharge of his most arduous duties—the heart-breaking neglect and crushing poverty, which are his reward for days and nights of wearying toil—he would be more respected than he is now. ‘A lazy race,’ say some. Ye saints grant me patience! Is not rehearsal in the morning, study in the afternoon, stage-strutting in the evening, and

study again at night, enough? For I have generally to 'cram' myself for the next morning's rehearsal whilst every other christian is enjoying the blessings of repose. Often, when sorely tried by eye-sealing sleep, have I coaxed myself into the belief that I could study in bed. 'What we wish we too often believe,' says dear Will; and after vainly struggling against the effects of utter prostration have I released the book; then with a muttered 'God help me!' fallen to that rest I so much needed. By-the-bye, Holmes, I was commissioned by the Manager to tell you, that (in spite of your repeated applications to the contrary,) he insists upon your playing Clown this Christmas. He declares that he cannot afford to lose your valuable talent in that particular line. In fact, old Sourface has built his hopes entirely upon the power you possess to 'draw' in that character. I was desired to ask whether you would consent to do as he wished; as, in the event of a refusal, Sourface hinted, in his peculiar way (which is not too delicate), that he would dispense altogether with your presence at the Theatre. The rehearsal is fixed for the day after to-morrow. What say you?"

"Does he offer to raise my miserable salary?"

gloomily demands Holmes, whose eyes are turned towards the bed on which his child is lying.

"Slightly, I believe," answers Joey, who gazes with sorrow upon his friend's averted face.

"Yes!" hisses Holmes between his closed teeth, without altering his position, "Yes, but not for her sake! not to relieve my poor child's many wants, and soothe the closing scenes of her young life's short but painful drama. No! but because I may prove the means of drawing a few extra shillings into the Theatre. What cares he for my silent writhings, and nightly vigils by a dying child's bedside, so that I make the public laugh—the thoughtless throngs, who, but for my mask of paint, might smile as well at the horrid gibbering of a fleshless skull. But let it pass. There is one comfort that steals across my heart; this is but a probationary state. The more you are purified here by suffering, the speedier is your entrance into heaven. I am content. So you will tell the Manager, Joey, that I consent—consent for the sake of *her*! To preserve whose dear life, my own were freely forfeited. Poor Lilly," he continues, the tears gathering slowly in his eyes, "and I must laugh and sing while you are

dying! perhaps when you are dead! No! No!" he adds, shudderingly and rapidly, "for the spirit of the poor clown will have passed away for ever!" Covering his face with his hands, he falls forward upon the table.

"Come, come, Holmes," cries Joey, with feeling, endeavouring to raise him, "you look upon the dark side of this picture. Lilly will yet be well, believe me! I shall see her pleasant face once more beaming with health; I shall see her gaily tripping on before, coaxing you, with her sunny smile to enjoy a day's study in the daisy studded fields; I again shall see her bounding in chase of the gaudy butterfly; and, when the insect captive quite is made, its bright spots rubbed away, its beauty with its little life extinguished, her ready tears will flow as once they did, when a poor moth lay bruised and dead within her half closed hand."

"Ah! would that it could be so!" sighs Holmes, a faint trace of one of the old smiles flitting around his mouth, and lingering there as if 'twere loth to go.

"It will be so, I feel it!" exclaims Joey, "I know a doctor in this town—a good and benevolent man—a man who unites in his own

person the two callings,—those of priest and physician. A combination which makes his profession holy indeed. He once did me a great service ; and, when I was about to depart, he shook my hand warmly, saying, ‘That, when I was in trouble, I should ever find a friend in him.’ So I’ll call, and beg that he will see Lilly. I shall not be refused, trust me. In the meantime, keep up your spirits. Farewell.”

A silent pressure of the hand thanks the honest fellow ; and, gently stooping, he kisses the sleeper’s marble brow and passes hastily from the room.

Silence and darkness take possession of the apartment shortly after the departure of Joey Tring ; for the remaining portion of candle has fallen into the bottle, and its light is extinguished. Yet the actor stirs not. The fire having long expired, the biting cold fills the room, freezing the water in the broken pitcher, and whitening, in its peculiar way, the panes of glass. But the actor feels not the pinching of the cold. He is far, far away ; walking hand-in-hand with his sick child, over beautiful fields studded with lovely flowers, in a sunny clime, the fragrant air of which to his extatic joy, breathes life, fresh life—

into her gentle bosom. Alas ! the awakening from such a dream.

Far into the lonely night, when all in slumber should be wrapt, a figure may be seen gradually returning to a consciousness of life ; and then, after staring wildly around a wretched room, send forth a groan of such dire agony, as would melt a heart of iron. Presently the same figure may be perceived staggering towards the couch of one, whom, though sorely pained, a gracious God has blessed with sleep. Falling there in an attitude of prayer, it pours forth the pent-up misery of a heart o'erflowing with its grief. The silver moon, bursting from the obscuring folds of a cloud (like the light of truth, struggling, triumphant, through the darkness of falsehood) casts its beams into the room, shedding a pale lustre over the faces, and forming a halo round the heads of the praying figure and dying child.

The day for the first rehearsal of the Pantomime arrives as days generally do, and away trudges our actor to the Theatre. Through the driving snow he goes, his scantily covered limbs trembling with the bitter cold. As he passes rapidly along, the country people turn after him, and with pointed

finger exclaim, "That's one of them acting chaps!" Passing hastily through several streets, Holmes at length reaches the theatre; a small structure, with a white-washed facing, down which the rain has taken the liberty of running, producing that agreeable appearance presented by a dirty child, after a half cleansing by means of a course of tears. An old lamp ornaments the front; the flickering of which (when the treasury happens to be in a sufficiently flourishing condition to admit of its appearing in a glorious state of illumination), consequent upon the unfortunate thing, not having a pane in its head, most aptly indicates the fortunes of the establishment, now nearly extinguished by adverse winds—then burning steadily and brightly.

Traversing a court by the side of the theatre, our actor comes to a low door; which, having no fastening, opens by a slight application of the hand. Passing through, the door slams, having weights attached; and now, as usual, he finds himself in utter darkness! The rush of two or three enormous rats does not disturb his equanimity in the least degree, being used to the scaring of such ugly visitors. He is underneath the stage. What a collection of dirt and lumber! Parts

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of old scenes ; broken “property” chairs ; crazy boxes of huge dimensions, (used to transport the “effects” of the establishment from one place to another,) dis-used machinery, that, once upon a time—in the palmy days of the structure—had been wont to raise the ghosts of those whose throats had been operated upon in the first act of some melo-drama, to the consternation, and utter confusion of a black-faced, gruff-voiced, villain in the last. Alas ! These worthies have now (degenerate days !) to stalk in solemn majesty, from the side scenes ; and many an unfortunate ghost, in laudably endeavouring to make his exit backwards (spirits always prefer this crab-like way of moving ; at least when they condescend to visit the stage) has given most unequivocal signs of substantiality, by knocking his brainless sconce, with most ungente force, against the “side wing.” On one of these unhappy ghostly exhibitions, the event was signaled by a gallery wag exclaiming (to the great merriment of the audience) “wood to wood !” Groping his way onwards, and stooping to avoid contact with the cob-webbed rafters, he ascends a short ladder, and reaches the stage.

This appears almost as dirty and dismal a

region as that from which he has just emerged. The curtain is drawn up ; and, from an open window at the back of the gallery, a stream of sickly light pours in, making the dreariness still more dreary. An old woman is sweeping between the benches in the pit, pausing, now and then, for the purpose of blowing upon her withered fingers, numbed by the cold. She takes no notice whatever of the cutting and slashing going on upon the stage, but treats it with the calm indifference engendered by satiety. If she does look up, it is but to shake her head gravely, and mutter feelingly, " Poor fellows, poor fellows ! " then resume her diurnal occupation of removing the last night's collection of dust and orange peel.

In the orchestra, exposed to the ague-giving draughts from underneath the stage, stands, or rather shivers, (for he does so most violently,) a solitary fiddler ; there for the express purpose of playing the " bits " of music incidental to the pieces. An extensive muffler covers his neck and mouth, and comforts his nose exceedingly ; the tip of that feature appearing above the said muffler, bearing a strong resemblance to a Kentish cherry. He wears mittens ; and the upper portion of his

fingers have a very raw appearance. Every minute, or so, he thrusts them violently into his mouth, and appears to derive great comfort therefrom. By-and-bye he commences a wild movement, which consists of a variety of jumps from one leg to the other, accompanied each time, by a most vigorous stamp. This is intended to warm his feet; and he continues the extraordinary exercise in a praiseworthy and energetic manner, until an admonition from Sourface, the manager, (who, by the way, is comfortably seated near the fire, and therefore cannot, for a moment, be supposed to know it is at all cold, beyond reach of the glowing charcoal,) suddenly and most effectually stops his nonsensical attempt. Still his subsequent acts evinced a degree of spirit quite surprising, when we consider that he had not known what it was to have a full meal for some days. Whether it was the result of accident or not (for some mortals anxious to detract from the greatness of the action, might be mean enough to insinuate that it was the former,) we will not take upon ourselves the responsibility of deciding; but, however, one thing is certain,—that just at the moment when Sourface had arrived at a complete state of warmth, and was rubbing

his red hands smilingly, (doubtless having forgotten that it was Winter,) our fiddler, with a refinement of vengeance we did not give him credit for, struck up in his shakiest tone the popular air of "Shivery Shakery, *ain't* it cold."

On the stage, in groups, stand the "Ladies and Gentlemen" of the establishment; and, however dissimilar in other respects, they bear a striking likeness in two points,—all have red noses, and are disagreeably hungry looking. Some are leaning against the side wings "going over" their parts together; others surround a charcoal fire, placed near the foot-lights; but the greater portion are in the "Green-room." This apartment lays no claim to the verdant color indicated by its name; but is, on the contrary, a wretchedly bare hole, with walls of a dirty yellow. An old form is placed along one side, upon which sole article of furniture, sits the "Old Man" of the company, actively engaged in rubbing up some faded spangles, destined to glitter in the forthcoming Pantomime upon the gorgeous dress of a dreadfully tyrannical King, who constantly gets knocked down (unwittingly of course) by his Prime Minister.

The remaining occupants of this delightful and salubrious retreat (which, to our imagination at least, ever seemed to ask—with melancholy jocularity—those misguided individuals who entered it with false ideas as to its verdant character, whether they saw “Any Green?” In fact, I have a strong notion that to this may be traced the origin of the above very popular question,) are absorbed in the perusal of certain strips of paper, affixed to the wall over the fire-place; inscribed on these, in a singular back hand, are the “casts” of characters for the several pieces. Many are the remarks made on these same strips. One actor declares, with despair in his face, that, “He could not get through the work imposed, were he to sit up during the whole time usually devoted to sleep.” Well, what then? *He does so.* Another, more fortunate, goes off rubbing his hands with great glee, exclaiming against the habit of grumbling contracted by *some* actors. Before he has reached the door, a mischievous rascal points out a cast he has accidentally passed over; and with a horrible chuckle, reads aloud “Grumblegruffin by Mr. Smith!” Oh, what an involuntary fall of the lower jaw! What beautiful visions

of nightly repose has not that fearful line banished ! But hold ! What young fellow is that, gazing at the "casts" so superciliously ? He is the "Juvenile Tragedian" of the company, reader, and rejoicing in that antidote to the poison of the profession, "a quick study."

"Clear the stage to begin !" bawls a voice from that place, the owner of which is seated before a consumptive looking deal table. That is Sourface, the manager.

This much-to-be-admired personage is tall and rather stout ; his hair is black, crisp, and curly ; his face (except on those very rare occasions when a run of luck has given the managerial stocking—dignified by the high-sounding name of "Treasury"—a dropsical appearance ;) wears such an unmistakeable expression of acidity, that he is the terror of all the milk-maids in the neighbourhood. One of those fair creatures have been known to go several streets out of her way rather than pass him. But we feel bound to pass over—as unworthy of our belief—the current rumour, that, a little girl brought him a basin of new milk, with the request "That he would be pleased to turn it into curds and whey." To return. He wears his unmentionables

extremely short ; for the purpose (some wags say ; Oh ! the extent of mortal wickedness !) of showing off a remarkably small foot. But there is one peculiarity of his—apart from his personal appearance—which it were a decided injustice to be guilty of omitting, inasmuch as it goes to prove the possession of strong and determined animal courage, and that is—a savage pleasure he seems to take in starting suddenly from behind the scenes, pointing out *some* little boy (Sourface is not particular when he feels this fiend-like passion upon him) who has been guilty of bawling out lustily “ Arder ! ” in the midst of intense and profound silence, (consequent upon the performance of a heart-breaking scene of domestic tragedy,) and promising unblushingly, the magnificent reward of ten shillings to any other little boy who will betray the daring offender ; whom, (of course no one will attempt to insinuate that he’s a small urchin,) he expresses his unalterable resolve to “ Thrash within a single inch of his life.” This unpaid for piece of information is generally rewarded by an ironical round of applause agreeably relieved by several “ Bravo Sourfaces,” and kind invitations to “ Speak up.”

“All the ladies and gentlemen wanted for

the opening," cries the manager, and straight-way they commence.

As this is the first rehearsal of the grand, local, historical, tragical, comical, and no-end-of-cal pantomime, the actors read their parts; mumbling rapidly through the speeches in a gloriously unintelligible style, until they arrive at the "cue," which is given out with unequalled gusto and loudness, putting us strongly in mind of men, who were constantly losing their voices when most wanted, and continually finding them when of no use. For the sake of those readers who may not have an opportunity of hearing their peculiar delivery, we will attempt to give a slight idea of it.

The interested reader must imagine that he sees the Evil Genius of the piece extended before him, or her, in the agonies of death, taking his last mortal pains with all that beautiful indifference and depth of comic humour for which our Christmas heroes are so justly celebrated. Then let him, or her, imagine the poor devil "doing" the following with the greatest amiability:—

Withmealasitisnowquite ALL OVER;
Myfuturebedwillnotproveone OF CLOVER!

Then picture the ruthless "King of Car-

D

rots," with one of those vegetables from which he takes his name, mercilessly punching the dead man's head, inviting him at the same time to

GotooldnickandsayIsent YE THERE,
You'rerathermellowso,you'llprove A PAIR !

Those unfortunate scarecrows in the back-ground, are the future demons of the " Muddy Swamp ;" very harmless looking persons now ; very cold and blue-looking ; casting, ever and anon, wistful glances at the charcoal fire. The favourite amusement, (in fact, the only one in which they appear capable of indulging,) of these curious individuals seems to be that of constantly endeavouring, in the most violent way, to embrace some unseen substance before them. This is the only demon quality discoverable. But we must confess to having a slight notion that the seemingly insane movement has remotely to do with a popular method of warming the hands : still we cannot be positive.

That little girl standing beside the scenic pillar, decently, but poorly clad, with sorrowful expression, is the Columbine. How different, in her every day dress, to the fairy-like being, who, at Christmas, will glide all smiles and buoyancy before the eyes of gap-

ing and delighted audiences! Still she has hope, (Oh! that bright and beautiful light! how it illumines the dreary darkness of the paths the sorrowing tread in this life!) in the misty and undefined future,—hope that, one day, she may burst upon the astonished world a shining star, and shed her welcome radiance over an aged mother's fast declining years. But will she reach the goal of her ambition? Ah, no! Consumption has placed his burning finger upon her wasted cheeks, and she is rapidly fading from life into eternity.

Near her stands the Harlequin; he has doffed his well-worn boots, and donned a pair of pumps, so that he may practise his dancing and "flying leaps" to advantage. They've arrived at the transformation, and on they go! harlequin, columbine, pantaloon, and clown. In the last, will be recognised our hero. He wears a cap and pumps *a la* harlequin, and goes through his business as if no sick child is awaiting his return home. But, to a close observer, his movements are found to be purely mechanical; for, in reality his mind is busying itself with far more serious things.

However, on go the preparations for fun

and frolic. There is the usual amount of bumps and thumps—good naturedly taken—for that misguided old man, the pantaloon; harlequin wheeling, and sausage stealing for our ancient favourite Mr. Clown; and for columbine, an amazing quantity of dancing.

What a striking contrast is presented in our hero! The midnight prayer by the bedside of the dying, and the limb-contorting, face-making clown of the day! Yet life is teeming with such melancholy opposites, could we but raise the veil that hides them from our view. Were the faces of the most common-place passengers in the streets, but indexes to their minds, to what importance would they not rise. Each has a history attached; some, terrible in the lightning rapidity with which calamity has fallen upon calamity; others, heart-touching in their depth of woe; yet, on, on, they pass, unheeded and unheeding, shrouding their mental tortures in the obscurity of a cold unfathomable exterior.

At length the rehearsal terminates; and Holmes, having obtained a trifling advance from the unfortunate manager, (who is merely awaiting the success, or non-success of the Christmas week, to bolt or stay accordingly,)

hastens homewards through the still falling snow with all speed; wondering in his poor sad heart, whether his Lilly has missed him! and then, the ready tears starting to his eyes, wondering whether he will miss her!

Shuddering, as if the passing thought had greater power to chill his blood, than the biting cold, and pulling his snow-covered hat further over his brow, he quickens still his pace; whilst, to his mental vision, rises the form of a little girl kneeling beside the prostrate body of a sick man, upon whom the burning hand of fever is laid. There is a comfortable look about the room. The nice white curtains to the latticed window and tent bedstead, bespeak cleanliness and industry. There is a rare old log, too, crackling, spluttering, and roaring upon the hearth; the flames mounting high up the chimney in emulation—each striving to out-leap the other—casting a ruddy glow over the drawn curtains, and warming everything in the room into life, despite the dull unearthly moaning of the wind and pouring of the rain, which beats against the panes of glass incessantly, as if clamouring to extinguish the merry log.

That is himself and child in the past.

Presently the scene changes, and the same little form may be seen preparing a supper with all that bustle which ever attends the performance of a loved duty by an affectionate child. The pleasant looking steam is rising in wreathes from the frugal, but hot meal ; and the little form, retiring a few steps clasps her tiny hands so joyously, and smiles so sweetly at the result of her labours, that, involuntarily, we think of the sad, sad change which age works in us ; when the sweet desire to *please* has fled, aghast, from out our hearts ; when *exaction*, with its hideous train of evils, takes its place and keeps it to the last, making us hateful to ourselves and others ; when the varnish is rudely rubbed from off the picture of life, and we see in it naught but hollowness and mockery ; when our hearts become the charnel houses for all the bright hopes that, have died, one by one, within us ; when—but let us cease ! Why, lives the body when the mind is dead ?

After she has examined the effect produced by her arrangements over and over again, and from different parts of the room, she nods her little head playfully as if satisfied ; then gliding noiselessly to the fire-place, she stirs the burning coals and rouses the im-

prisoned sparks, that dart upwards merrily, like tiny spirits rejoicing in their freedom. Now she is in a listening attitude, with finger on lip, as if chiding everything into silence. But this seems to have no effect upon the fire, for (its indignation probably being aroused by what it no doubt thought a most grossly unjustifiable poke in the side) it roars away in a very boisterous manner, taking no notice whatever of her anxiety to hear, but maliciously exulting in the noise ; so that, at last, she gives over and trips lightly to the door, peeping down the stairs. All is silent, however ; so, with a very, very slight sigh, she closes the door and commences to sew. She has not been seated many minutes ere the "Waits" are heard without. Child-like, she bounds to the window ; and throwing back the curtains, looks into the street.

The moon is shining brightly, silvering the snow as it lies upon the ground and casting long shadows behind the Waits, whose coats and hats are covered. Presently a man appears in the distance, advancing at a hurried pace. He has a large cloak wrapped round him ; and his mouth and neck are covered by a huge comforter. Passing by the poor Waits he gives them a coin, crosses the road, and

rapidly enters the house. The child, meanwhile, has seen him ; gives the unfortunate fire a parting poke in the side, puts away her work, and now, smilingly, awaits the entrance of the man.

Shortly the door opens, and he enters. Taking the little girl up as if she were a doll he kisses her; then unrols his comforter, shakes the cloak, and beats the snow from off his hat and boots. Rubbing his hands cheerily and looking round the warm room with a pleased smile; glancing too, at the child, (who is busying herself at the table, looking as if it were the most delightful thing in the world to do one's duty and make people happy,) he seats himself before the fire, stretching out his legs, and gazing intently at the bright embers; thinking, all the while, what he should do without the fairy form by his side. Sighing he falls into a reverie. By-and-bye his sleeve is gently pulled; he starts slightly, glances quickly around, seems relieved and smiles. Drawing cheerfully up to the table, he breathes a simple grace and forthwith attacks the supper. The child, with her hands crossed upon her knees, sits at his feet; thinking, whilst she watches him, how much she would like to be rich for his sake.

The Dutch clock, ticking pleasantly in the corner, strikes the hour of twelve.

The man rises, lamp in hand, and lights the child to her chamber. Stooping down, he fondly parts the golden curls; and, with a muttered, "Angels guard you!" closes the door. The light of the lamp falls full upon his pale face: his eyes are wet with tears.

Receding to the room, he sits down to the table; and, taking a book from the drawer, commences his nightly study. After a time the spirit wearies and he falls asleep. The faint light of the lamp flickers and expires; then the pale beams of the moon struggle and battle through the half opened curtains into the room and stream across the sleeper's face.

The clock strikes the hour of three.

The noise rouses the slumberer; and, after looking out into the deserted street, covered with an unbroken sheet of snow, and illuminated in every corner by the lovely orb of night, he retires slowly, and noiselessly to his bed.

That's himself again, and in the past.

The scene changes for the last time. The little girl is dying. Her tiny hands are tightly clasped around her father's neck. She

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speaks hopefully and trustingly of meeting her gentle mother in heaven. Her sweet and silvery voice sinks lower yet, and lower. She asks to be remembered; and begs, that on her lowly grave forget-me-not's be planted; so that, the spot being visited and the flower borne off, may prove a sad and quiet remembrancer, of the poor one passed away for ever. Slowly, and gently, and reluctantly her loving hold relaxes; and, with a sigh so soft, so imperceptible, that the attent ear could scarcely catch the fleeting sound even in the still solemnity of that chamber, her angel spirit sinks, smilingly, to rest! Her father, stunned for a time, recovers; and with a shriek, ear-piercing and terrible, falls, heart-crushed, upon the floor.

That's himself, too, *but in the future.*

Uttering an involuntary cry, Holmes bounds along the streets, nor slackens pace until arrived at home.

Hastening up the stairs, he enters the room and discovers the doctor and landlady in close conversation—both speaking seriously and in an undertone. No words are needed, for he reads the fearful verdict in their looks. She must die.

She must die! The awful words seem

impressed upon everything around; upon the wild wandering wind, as it sighs mournfully upon passing the house; upon the descending snow, as it falls languidly on the frozen earth; upon the trees, as arrayed in white, they seem to mourn the passing away of some pure and beautiful and holy thing; upon the red sun as it sinks to rest behind the far-off hills, to rise again and shed its lustrous rays, perhaps, o'er the beings of a fairer world; upon the plants the sufferer loved so well and tended to the last, now drooping fast their heads, unnoticed and neglected.

Setting his teeth firmly, and contracting his blanched lips painfully, lest his child should perceive the emotion that seems as if about to burst his heart—burst it with such mighty force, that the vast report would ring throughout the land; crying for freedom to the *white* slave chained to misery and poverty, and want!—he awaits what the doctor has to say. Kindly and with all christian feeling, he begs him to prepare for the worst. The poor Actor assures him it is needless—he is prepared. The words come thickly from his throat and slowly, but there are no tears; the fever of the mind has dried them up. The good doctor then

tells him that no earthly aid can avail his child—that it is His will, she shall go hence—that her death will be a painless one, and she will pass unconsciously into the arms of her Almighty Father, as if falling to a sleep from which there is an awakening on the morrow.

The agonised expression of the Actor's face, is frightful ; the doctor, noticing it, goes and sits by his side, pouring into his ear every religious consolation and recalling to his mind all the beautiful promises God has made to those, his children, who suffer and rebel not ! By-and-bye he takes his departure, beckoning the landlady from the room, who shakes her head in commiseration. No sooner does the door close upon them, than Holmes rises, and tottering to his child's bedside, looks on her pale placid face in mute despair. She sleeps : the doctor's composing draught has done its office. Gently pushing aside the hair that veils her wan features, he gazes long and intensely at them ; they forcibly remind him of his poor wife's the day she died ; when, weary and foot-sore, she lay sleeping on his arm—that arm which boasted a giant's power to protect her against man, and yet was so weak—so very

weak—'gainst death! He takes her wasted hand tenderly and covers it with kisses; then sitting down by her side, mutters convulsively,—

“ So you must leave me, Lilly, must you? No more to cheer me with your smile, and silvery voice! No more on Sabbath days, to take my hand and lead me to the village church; telling me I should hear—as you had often heard—your mother’s angel voice joining in the hymn of praise, and piercing through the organ’s noble swell. No! Ah, no! You must fall into the land of shadows, for you are called my child.”

Clasping her small hand tighter, and tighter, within his own, as if it would close upon and hold it there for ever, he sits for a time motionless; then, gradually, as if reluctant, his hold relaxes, and his sorrow bowed head seeks its rest upon his breast. Presently Joey Tring appears at the door; he has been told all by the landlady, and his eyes are read with tears.

Seeing the Actor’s position, he hesitates to disturb such sacred grief. Tears start afresh to his eyes; for he remembers, in the indistinct past, being called to the death-bed of a little sister, who told him not to weep,

as she was going to her Saviour. Rubbing his hat uneasily, he endeavours to speak, but the words will not come; so advancing quietly, he touches the mourner's arm; and, as the solemn silence is not broken by a sound in response, he becomes alarmed; and turning the body round, utters a cry: he has fainted!

A fortnight has nearly passed since first the doctor attended. He has paid the sufferer daily visits, and the good man's servant has never been sent empty-handed to the poor actor's humble abode.

It is midnight, and Holmes is watching—as he watched many a long night—by his dying child's bed; with none, save the stars, for companions. Often does he gaze at them and wonder in which of those bright worlds his Lilly's soul will join his wife's! He wonders too, whether they will be enabled to see him from their distant starry home, and pityingly, and sorrowingly, gaze upon his loneliness! Becoming tired of their steady twinkling, and unable to remove his eyes, he draws the curtains close; and then the darkness seems darker still, for the faint gleam emitted by the rushlight. The Bible is open upon the table, and the feeble rays of the light fall

upon its holy pages, as if inviting perusal. Trimming the wick, he sits down, resting his elbow upon the table, and shading his eyes with his hand. Quickly he meets with a chapter suited to the occasion, and its soothing influence steals over his soul. He pauses pondering over its promises. Little does he know how much he will need the sweet consolation afforded by religion this night! He dreams not that the angels of the Lord are in waiting, to guide his child's soul heavenward. A movement from the bed attracts his attention; and, in an instant he is by its side. The poor sufferer requires a drink. Her voice is very, very faint, and she speaks with effort. Holmes moistens her parched lips, and she smiles gratefully—lovingly. Drawing him closely to her, she takes his hand, looking him sorrowfully in the face with those dim eyes, which so soon—so very soon—will open in another, and a brighter and a purer world. She bids him not grieve, that, a brief space sooner, it has pleased her Heavenly Father to call her to his side. The Actor sobs, and straight her arms are clasped around his neck. She asks him whether he will not sometimes visit his little Lilly's grave and whisper there soft words of love; which

if unanswered, he must anger not, but think his lost one hears yet cannot speak ! Kissing her face, now covered with the damp of death, he promises. Long she speaks, and all of comfort to her father ; until growing weary, she bids him draw the curtains close, and pray. Wishing him a good, good night, and imprinting a fervent kiss upon his burning cheek, she sinks gently, and languidly, back upon her pillow. After gazing at his child's loved features, and watching her eyes close in a tranquil sleep, he heaves a deep sigh ; then, sorrowfully shaking his head, noiselessly closes the curtains.

In a few minutes the Actor is engaged in prayer. Whilst he prays, the darkness of the night gradually fades away, giving place to the grey shades of morn ; the bright stars pale before the glorious light of the coming sun ; the mists melt from the mountain tops ; the robin, in expectation of his morning meal, sits upon the window-sill and sings his wished-for notice ; all nature awakens, and rejoices in renewed life. When he rises it is very far into the morning. The chamber is as still as death ; not a sound, save the pattering of the thickly falling sleet against the windows, disturbs the awful silence. Every-

thing in the room seems fearfully still, and the Actor can hear, with [redacted] distinctness, the beating of his own anxious heart. The golden rays of the sun are playing over the sufferer's bed, and rest lovingly, caressingly, upon one of her small hands out-peeping from the curtains. Gliding towards the bed, a paralyzing foreboding seizes upon his mind, and makes the blood rush and whirl about his heart, raising [redacted] the veins upon his forehead, until they stand out like whip-cord.—*Can she be dead!* Oh! how that terrible thought falls upon his mind—falls with the weight of iron—stunning him and crushing all his energy. By-and-bye he recovers; and pushing aside the curtains, is grateful—so grateful—to discover his child in a beautiful sleep. Her head is slightly inclined—the uncombed masses of her hair covering a part of her face, jealous of its beauty. A sweet and almost heavenly smile rests upon her parted lips, as if she were communing with angels, and tasted of some promised bliss. A slight tinge of red is upon her cheeks, and the whole expression of her face bespeaks placidity. One hand is placed upon her heart, the other hanging down negligently. Holmes, drawing back, exclaims rapturously, “How beau-

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tiful! How, very, very beautiful!" Long and silently he gazes, wondering how anything so surpassingly lovely can belong to life; then, advancing, he touches his child's forehead, when a frightful yell, wrung from the depths of an agonized heart, fills the room and rings through the frosty air without! She is dead! Her gentle spirit has passed away, and the poor player is quite, quite alone! A pause ensues—a pause as of faculties benumbed—a heavy lifeless fall upon the floor, and all is silent as the dead child sweetly smiling!

It is *Boxing* night, and what remains of Lily Holmes is under the snow-covered earth. She is but slumbering as we all must slumber before we awaken unto eternal life. Would that all children were taught to think as she was,—that there was no such thing as *death*, but that we all passed from this life, in a beautiful sleep, to another more fair, more pure, more holy. Why teach their little minds to dwell upon a *grave* for those they love? A grave! Oh! why not raise their thoughts and lead them to think we do but pass from life to life; casting aside the baser facts—the painfully material.

The Theatre is crowded to the verge of

suffocation, far surpassing the Manager's brightest hopes. He has sent repeated messages to Holmes during the week, to the effect that, he must appear as clown, or starve! The people, as usual on the first night of a pantomime, laudably determine not to hear a single word of the piece preceding it, but leave the actors to the enjoyment of successive scenes of dumb-show. They are awaiting, with the utmost impatience, the clown's much longed for "Here we are! How do you do to-morrow!" Holmes's great talent in this character is well-known, and beaming faces proclaim the joyous anticipation of a right merry laugh.

On a stool, with its ghastly face buried in its hands, sits a lonely, sorrowed-bowed figure. No light, save that of the moon, is in the room, and it streams across an empty bed. The ever watchful stars shoot their bright rays into the wretched apartment, but they fail to give light to the fearful darkness of the figure's soul. It seems as if struggling desperately against some grief—battling with the promptings of a heart weakened in its christian faith by terrible despair. Suddenly the figure rises as if determined upon a certain point. It puts on a hat and wraps a

faded cloak about its form. Taking a long, long look at the room, and thinking of all that had passed therein, it sighs as if its poor wrung heart would burst ; then, passing with rapid strides down the stairs, goes forth into the cheerless streets. The driving sleet beats against its face, and the cutting wind searches to its very bones ; so, pulling the hat firmly over its brow, and drawing the cloak tightly around its body, it hastens onward with a decided gait.

But one thought possesses its mind—the means whereby its mighty load of worldly care and grief can be best thrown off. No thought of an Almighty *now* has power to stop the terrific rush of feeling, carrying its soul to destruction. The figure's mind is a chaos. Still the good spirits battle bravely, disputing every inch of ground ; soothing the chafed one lovingly, and endeavouring to drive the dark, fearful thought from out its heart. They whisper softly in its ear, how their Father ever aideth those afflicted ones, who look up to him for comfort and support in this life's sad and wearying trials ; how He bids us not throw down our burdens, but bear them with christian resignation and trusting love ; until he the All Merciful, shall, at his good plea-

sure exclaim, “ *Cast thou them off for ever !* ” These gentle promptings the figure hears not ; or does so as through a medium ; or, as a man would hear who had received some blow which partially stunned him—comprehending the *words*, but not the *sense*. From most of the houses bright lights stream, and shadows, as of people dancing, pass and re-pass the windows. All seem to be enjoying the time-honoured festivities of the season. As the lonely figure passes hastily by a lamp, the light is thrown upon its face : its cadaverous appearance is appalling. The eye-balls protrude painfully, as if they would penetrate the awful shadows floating between this life and eternity. The teeth are closely pressed together, the lips drawn tightly over them, and the whole expression bearing the stamp of a will of iron. The fingers clutch the folds of the cloak, pressing them as in a vice. But for its hard breathing the figure might be taken for a spectre. Still, on, on it goes. Presently it arrives at a bridge. The moon is shining, and its bright face is reflected in the water far beneath. Masses of frozen snow are drifting down the river, like Hindoo bodies, floating silently into the holy water of the Ganges. Muttering quickly, “ I shall

starve, shall I, if I do not play the fool when my child is in the grave? Ah! the poor player soon will be beyond your power!" Holmes—for it is he—rapidly ascends to the parapet of the bridge. Throwing off his hat and cloak, he stands there for a second, with his hands upraised; then, crying aloud "Lilly I come!" springs from the bridge into the rushing water. A brief struggle—a dismal wailing cry—the cry of a tortured spirit gaining its freedom—and the poor clown is no more! A minute after, and the moving water gives no evidence that, from its icy bosom, a mortal's soul has winged its flight—*Where?*

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In a pretty churchyard, adorned by evergreens, and far from the noise and distracting bustle of the city, a plain grave may be seen. There is no stone to tell the passers by the name of him who lies so silently beneath the earth; there is no plant, or flower, placed upon the mound, to show that some poor heart doth miss the loved one slumbering there, and will do so for ever; no! he has passed away unnoticed, his gentle spirit quite borne down by the heavy griefs which

fell upon and crushed it. The thick masses of clouds are sweeping rapidly over the moon's face, obscuring its light, which bursts in fitful streams upon the spot ; making it appear in the long intervals, all the more dreary and desolate from the transient brightness borrowed from its brilliant beams. The chilling wind, which whistles tremulously as it rushes past the old gravestones, raises the snow from off the hardened ground, and whirls it high into the frosty air, twisting and twirling it about until it assumes a thousand fantastic shapes ; then, as if tired of the sport, it subsides gradually with a faint moan, leaving the rudely disturbed flakes once more in peace to settle on mound and tomb and stone.

As the clock strikes ten, a man, muffled up, enters the churchyard, after pausing a moment at the gate, as if impressed by the solemn silence of the place, and not wishing to disturb it by his presence. Advancing carefully along the footpath, and leaving the impression of his feet upon the snow as he does so, he pauses suddenly before the newly made grave. Taking a Forget-me-not from under his coat, he stoops down, and brushing away the snow which has collected upon it, he plants the flower in the earth, mutter-

ing some words the while, unheard, because of the heavy sobs choking his utterance. Joey—the reader will have anticipated this—looks long and sorrowfully at the grave of his old comrade, the tears trickling down his face. Receding slowly—very slowly—as if loath to leave a spot which he no more will gaze upon, and turning back every now and then to catch a glimpse of it, as it fades fast in the darkness from his sight, he reaches the gate. Pausing there, he prepares to take a last lingering look ; the wind at this moment, as if in a friendly mood, disperses the black clouds, which have obscured the moon's rays, and its pale white light streams full upon the poor player's grave ; revealing to the sad watcher in the distance, the broad flakes of snow dancing wildly about it—the flower his own honest hand had planted there—which, (as he slowly disappears in the indistinct and shadowy darkness of the night,) speaks to his faithful heart and haunts him ever afterwards—speaks out as plainly, as sweetly, and as sorrowfully as a living thing,—

“FORGET ME NOT!”

THE END.



ERRATA.

PAGE 14, Line 2. Instead of *a women*, read "*a woman*."

„ 34, „ 6. Instead of *sayyou'llprove a pair*, read
"*soyou'llprove a pair*."

„ 48, „ 2. Insert a capital K in "*kissing*."

„ 51, „ 11. Instead of *much longer for*, read "*much
longed for*."